
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS: A PLANNING GUIDE

**Based on a County-Community Collaboration
Pilot Project in Topanga Canyon**

August 9, 2006 FINAL

Note: This Planning Guide provides examples of best practices and considerations for developing an emergency management strategy through a community collaboration approach in an unincorporated area. Because every unincorporated area is unique, not all methodologies used may be applicable. Any final disaster response plans or emergency management plans require, at a minimum, the involvement of the Chief Administrative Office (CAO), Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Sheriff; review by the Emergency Management Council (EMC); and adoption by the Board of Supervisors in the County of Los Angeles.

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BACKGROUND

In April 2001, the Office of Unincorporated Area Services (OUAS) in the Los Angeles County Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) began to implement the County's Strategic Plan for Municipal Services for Unincorporated Areas. Topanga Canyon (the Canyon), in the Third Supervisorial District, was chosen as the pilot location for emergency management planning for unincorporated areas, because this community of more than 10,000 people is uniquely vulnerable to fast-moving wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides.

Beginning in early 2004, approximately 60 community members and personnel from County and State agencies worked together as a Task Force to develop a survival guide that is customized for Topanga Canyon. This Task Force is completing a recovery guide. Both of these documents will serve as a basis for preparation of Topanga Canyon's Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and Recovery Plan (RP). The Recovery Guide is in its final stages; and the Survival and Recovery Planning Guides share lessons learned for implementing an emergency management planning process in other unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County (the County).

In December 2005, in response to a request by the Board of Supervisors, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) identified the lack of hazard and community-specific, coordinated ERPs in unincorporated areas of the County as one of the primary gaps in a review of emergency preparedness. OEM recommended that an Assessment Study be conducted of the preparedness needs and hazards and the ability to: *"address community-specific coordinated response plans"* for these areas.

APPROACH

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles formed the approach to this project:

- Engage the community with the appropriate public agencies in the planning and communication processes
- Build on the assets already in place in the community
- Solicit a strong commitment from all involved stakeholders
- Provide the unincorporated areas with the same level of hazard and community-specific planning that the law mandates that cities provide for their residents

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The following steps outline a process that an unincorporated area might use in developing coordinated ERPs and RPs, building on the experiences of the Topanga Canyon pilot project. In some areas, recommendations are based on lessons learned rather than what actually happened during the pilot.

These steps are provided to assist unincorporated communities and governmental agencies and must be used in conjunction with County, State, and Federal planning guidelines. ERPs, standard operating procedures, and other supporting documents should incorporate components, principles, and policies from the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Some of the steps may overlap in terms of timing.

- **Step 1** – Prioritize unincorporated communities based on need for coordinated ERPs and determine an approach to address emergency management planning for each
- **Step 2** – Establish a joint Task Force of community and public agency members, which can form Work Groups to focus on specific issues as required
- **Step 3** – Assess community and public agency needs
- **Step 4** – Develop the ERP and supporting documents
- **Step 5** – Develop the Recovery Plan (RP) for the unincorporated area
- **Step 6** – Develop and implement a public education and outreach plan for both the ERP and RP
- **Step 7** – Evaluate the plans through tabletops, drills, and exercises
- **Step 8** – Obtain formal approval of the developed plans
- **Step 9** – Identify best means to review and update plans

BEST PRACTICES

The risks facing different unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County vary based on a number of geographic and demographic factors. While many of the details of the Topanga Canyon Disaster Survival Guide (Survival Guide) are specific to that community, “Best Practices” were developed and can be applied to unincorporated areas in the County of Los Angeles. The following Best Practices are starting points – they are not exhaustive, do not apply to all communities, require ongoing expansion and updating, and often involve a combination of methodologies and tools. Some of the Best Practices are applicable to one or more of the Implementation Steps. All support the preparedness phase; others are more applicable to the response phase or the recovery phase of emergency management:

Best Practices	Applicable Steps	Applicable Phases		
		Response	Recovery	Preparedness
Implement a process of community engagement and direct communication with the applicable Board of Supervisor's Office and local, State, and Federal agencies	2	X	X	X
Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	X	X	X
Identify all key stakeholders -- within the community, the County, other government agencies, and other nonprofit and business partners (e.g., cable companies, utilities, American Red Cross)	1, 2, 3	X	X	X
Establish an ongoing structure to institutionalize the collaboration necessary to implement, regularly evaluate, and update plans	2	X	X	X
Conduct a cross-departmental assessment of current plans and disaster-response capabilities	3	X	X	X
Develop a unified tactical response plan for the Sheriff, Fire, and other responding County departments, including a common map of tactical planning zones (based on Thomas Guide or agreed upon unincorporated area boundaries) to assist in coordination across the various departments responding to a disaster	4	X		X
Identify the appropriate types of shelters and options, depending on the type of disaster, community topography, ingress/egress, population density, and related factors	4	X		X
Identify the roles and plans for all schools in the community	4	X		X
Customize and formalize local and regional traffic management plans, involving all appropriate State and local transportation and law enforcement agencies	4	X		X
Determine evacuation routes for each neighborhood	4	X		X
Analyze and plan for using existing public and private resources, including community expertise and resources, in disaster response	4	X		X
Identify signage needs prior to and during emergencies and determine how to provide, install, store, and deploy signage	4	X		X
Review and update current mutual aid plans and agreements to request and mobilize resources stationed outside of the disaster area	4	X		X

Best Practices	Applicable Steps	Applicable Phases		
		Response	Recovery	Preparedness
Identify and implement, where possible, appropriate emergency notification systems	4	X	X	X
Develop plans for animal evacuation	4	X		X
Communicate disaster response and evacuation plans ahead of time to residents, first responders, mutual aid agencies, and likely Incident Commanders	6			X
Ensure clear communication with local communities about disaster preparedness and response	6			X
Provide ongoing training within and across departments	6			X
Develop written, customized briefing materials for first responders from outside of the area	6	X		X
Conduct regular tabletop exercises, drills, and exercises with involved community, County, and other participants to identify gaps	7, 9	X	X	X
Ensure emergency management plans that require County involvement obtain the necessary County approvals	8	X	X	X
Distribute plans to the community and other stakeholders	9	X	X	X

One of the over-riding factors is the need for the involved community, Board Office, and County personnel to have a passion to get a plan done. In addition, much of what is contained in this Planning Guide is only possible when the necessary County resources – staff, budgetary, and material resources – are available for the involved County departments, primarily Fire, Sheriff, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and Department of Public Works (DPW).

Once a community has completed an emergency management plan or approach, it would be useful for the County to convene forums where others can benefit from their lessons learned. Such lessons learned should be incorporated into updated versions of this Planning Guide.

BACKGROUND

On September 20, 2005, the Board of Supervisors directed OEM to report on:

- A post-mortem assessment of the County's ability to respond to large-scale disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina (August 2005)
- A public outreach campaign for disaster preparedness
- An assessment of the County's Operational Area Emergency Response Plan (OAERP) with recommendations to improve its effectiveness in large-scale disaster response

The OEM report, issued on December 16, 2005, identified eleven findings and ten recommendations. Finding #1 stated:

"While first responder agencies have good plans for how they handle their specific responsibilities, for the most part, defined unincorporated areas within the County do not have hazard-specific, coordinated Emergency Response Plans [ERPs] developed for their communities. Although the OAERP provides the structure and tasking of the County's response, it does not specifically address detailed community-specific plans for the unincorporated areas."

This section builds on the lessons learned and best practices from the Topanga Canyon Pilot Project and outlines an approach for other unincorporated areas to adapt in developing hazard and community-specific coordinated plans. Appendix A describes the emergency management responsibilities of involved County departments.

APPROACH

The following steps outline a process similar to that used in Topanga Canyon. In some areas, recommendations are based on lessons learned rather than what actually happened during the pilot. The steps are presented as the elements necessary for a successful project. In some communities, not all of these steps will be needed. In other communities, additional steps may be required.

These steps are provided to assist unincorporated communities and governmental agencies and must be used in conjunction with County, State, and Federal planning guidelines. ERPs, Response Plans (RPs), standard operating procedures, and other supporting documents should incorporate components, principles, and policies from the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The NIMS components include eight core emergency management functions:

- 1) Evacuation
- 2) Warning
- 3) Resource management
- 4) Direction and control
- 5) Communications
- 6) Mass care
- 7) Health and medical
- 8) Emergency public information

The risks facing different unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County vary based on a number of geographic and demographic factors. While many of the details of the Topanga Canyon plan are specific to that community, "Best Practices" were developed and can be applied to any of the unincorporated areas in the County of Los Angeles. Best Practices are a combination of methodologies and tools and are presented within the applicable steps of the Planning Guide. They are also listed in the Executive Summary.

Step 1 - Prioritize unincorporated communities and determine an approach to address emergency management planning for each

A group composed of representatives of the five Board of Supervisor Offices, the Office of Unincorporated Area Services (OUAS), and OEM should guide Step 1 to ensure that determination of priorities coincides with all other aspects of planning within Los Angeles County. The specific actions for this step are:

- ***Identify potential levels of risks in unincorporated communities*** – Each unincorporated area faces a unique combination of risks based on numerous geographic and demographic factors. For each community, identify these risks and the likelihood of each occurring.
- ***Determine an approach to emergency management planning for each community*** – For some communities, the surrounding cities may provide the best assistance. For others, a modification of this methodology might be the best approach. There are three types of communities that will be engaged in emergency management planning, including ERPs and RPs:
 - **Type 1** – Communities that are isolated from other population centers and that have their own unique infrastructure (e.g., Topanga Canyon, Santa Catalina Island, Agua Dulce)
 - **Type 2** – Large unincorporated communities away from the center of the County that are adjacent to cities that have ERPs (e.g., Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Altadena)

- **Type 3** – Unincorporated areas – populated communities and islands – surrounded by cities (e.g., East Los Angeles, Florence-Firestone, Marina del Rey)

The County has retained a firm to conduct an Assessment Study of the unincorporated areas to:

- Identify emergency and disaster issues, risks, and priorities, including preparedness needs and hazards
 - Determine the ability to “*address community-specific, coordinated response plans*” for these unincorporated areas
 - Verify that the surrounding incorporated areas have up-to-date plans (Note: Plans must be written if none exist and if appropriate.¹)
 - Define the resources needed to address the identified risks in each unincorporated area
- **Determine resource requirements** – Identify the resource requirements – physical resources, expertise (including consultant services), and funding – and availability of such resources in the County, the community, and other agencies.

The Assessment Study will determine which unincorporated areas might benefit the most from a community collaboration approach to emergency management planning. The County currently estimates that probably 6 to 20 unincorporated areas might be candidates. The Assessment Study’s definition of what resources are needed will be useful for ensuring adequate resources are made available. ***Much of what is contained in this Planning Guide is only possible when the necessary resources – staff, budgetary, and material resources – are available for the involved County departments.*** At a minimum, County departments will need to assign staff members to serve on Task Forces and Work Groups; such Task Force and Work Group assignments may result in departments needing additional resources to ensure needed work assignments are performed.

- **Develop criteria** – Develop criteria for determining the priority order in which to address each community’s needs. Criteria could include the types of disasters that may affect a given area and the likelihood of that disaster occurring, existing infrastructure within the community to support the planning process, desire of the local community to participate, and willingness of adjacent or surrounding cities to include the unincorporated area in their planning.
- **Determine timeline for developing plans** – Each community plan and planning process will be unique. After determining the approach to

¹ Source: OEM.

planning, timelines can be developed, building on the timeframe and lessons learned in that planning process. Further, geographic proximity and similar geography, hazards, and other conditions may allow – and in some cases, recommend – that certain otherwise distinct communities be treated as a common area for the purpose of emergency planning. Appendix B provides tasks to be included in developing a timeline for such planning efforts.

- **Estimate and budget for anticipated direct and indirect expenses –** Depending on the complexity of the emergency planning requirements, the undertaking may be modest or costly. Some of the potential direct or indirect expenses to consider are: community guides and educational materials; barricades; emergency signage (portable, used only during emergencies); evacuation notification systems; personnel costs for dedicated staff; consultants for facilitation skills or specialized expertise; and emergency supplies, including water, medical supplies, and other needs for shelters.

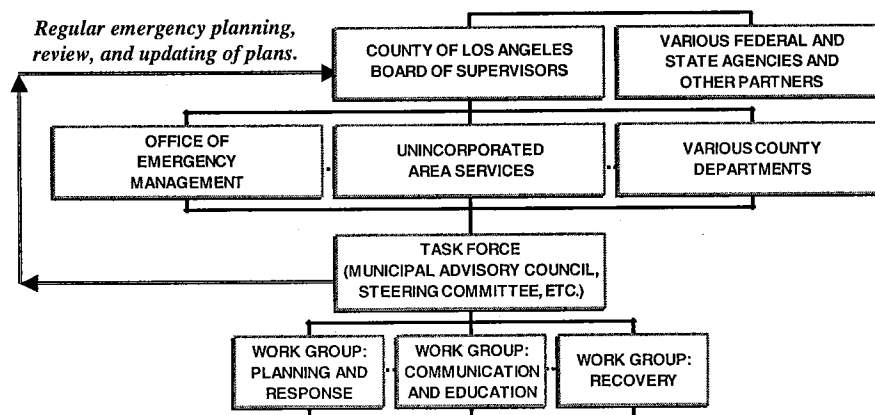
Best Practice

- ⊕ **Identify all key stakeholders – within the community, the County, other government agencies, and other nonprofit and business partners (e.g., cable companies, utilities, American Red Cross)**

Step 2 – Establish a joint-Task Force of community and public agency members

This chart highlights various organizational relationships that may need to be involved in emergency response and recovery planning.

Task Force Collaborative Relationships



The following guidelines may determine who should be involved and what their roles might be:

- **Identify and recruit the right people** – One of the success factors of the Topanga Canyon model has been the high level of community engagement and support from the applicable public agencies. It is essential to recruit key community leaders and members and to gain their agreement to participate fully for the length of the planning process.

It is also essential to get the commitment from public agencies to involve the right people consistently. At a minimum, such involvement would likely include Fire, Sheriff, OEM, OUAS, and, depending on the unincorporated areas' issues, DPW, Animal Care, the Department of Public Health (Public Health), or the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), to name a few. Non-County agencies, though, may also be key players, such as the local school district, California Highway Patrol (CHP), CALTRANS, or the State Office of Emergency Services (OES).

Once policy and procedural changes are in place, agency representatives can be the local and regional personnel already assigned to the unincorporated area. They do not have to be the decision-makers who were involved in the development of the respective plans. Each public agency that will potentially be involved in disaster planning, response, or recovery should be part of the process from the beginning. The learning curve is steep; Task Force² membership needs to be stable.

The applicable Board Office for each unincorporated community is an essential resource for the emergency planning process. The Board field deputies have relationships with the community, the County, and other public agencies that can enhance the planning process. They can also facilitate community engagement that ensures invaluable local knowledge of a community's needs and resources is appropriately incorporated into ERPs and RPs.

Many community-specific issues need to be addressed to have a workable plan. Having the community involved in these decisions is difficult, but essential. The result will be a greater degree of understanding and acceptance by all parties.

- **Establish a Task Force** – The Task Force should be charged to address policy issues and serve as an advisory body structure resulting from this planning process. Members should be community leaders representing local emergency planning and response organizations, chambers of commerce, and homeowners' associations. The Task Force should also have representatives from public agencies who can ensure that decisions are realistic, timely, and referred to the appropriate agencies for approval. In short, the goal of the Task Force is two-fold:

² May also function as a steering committee.

- Bring the right experience, decision-making authority, and resources to support Work Groups
- Transition into the on-going advisory body that institutionalizes the implementation, evaluation, and update of the emergency management plan

Appendix C outlines a draft charter for the Task Force.

- **Establish Work Groups** – The Task Force can establish Work Groups to undertake the planning efforts. The following are useful to start:

- **Planning & Response and Recovery Work Groups** should be chartered early on in the process. Members should be recruited based on expertise and interest in the process. Additional members should be recruited to fill specific skill sets as needs are identified during the planning process.
- **A Communication & Education Work Group** should also be chartered at the beginning of the planning process. After an initial organizing meeting to understand and refine the project scope, members of this Work Group should be integrated into the Planning & Response and Recovery Work Groups until enough planning and decision-making have occurred so that the required messages and educational components have begun to take shape. At that time, the Communication & Education Work Group should begin to meet regularly.

Appendix C outlines draft charters for Work Groups.

These Work Groups should meet on an accelerated schedule. In Topanga Canyon, Work Groups met on the same day (morning and afternoon) of the month so that, if necessary, representatives could easily attend other meetings.

Best Practices

- ⊕ ***Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations***
- ⊕ ***Identify all key stakeholders – within the community, the County, other government agencies, and other nonprofit and business partners (e.g., cable companies, utilities, American Red Cross)***
- ⊕ ***Implement a process of community engagement and direct communication with the local, State, and Federal agencies and applicable Board of Supervisors' Office***
- ⊕ ***Establish an ongoing structure to institutionalize the collaboration necessary to implement, regularly evaluate, and update plans***

★ *Develop common maps and terminology and coordinate the ERPs and RPs for Fire, Sheriff, and other first responders*

Step 3 – Assess community and public agency needs

- **Identify and prioritize unincorporated areas that would benefit from customized emergency preparedness plans** – Each unincorporated area faces a unique combination of risks based on numerous geographic and demographic factors. For each community, the Task Force (or one of its Work Groups) should identify these risks and the likelihood of each occurring.
- **Have local County personnel use common maps, community names, and terminology, and coordinate their ERPs and RPs** – As a starting point, key departments – typically the local Sheriff and Fire Departments – should compare their ERPs and RPs to ensure they are compatible, use common maps, define the geographic areas in a common way, and use common terminology.
- **Conduct tabletop exercises, drills, and other exercises to assess needs and resources** – Once the Task Force and Work Groups are in place and understand their charters, there should be at least a tabletop drill consisting of likely disaster scenarios. Such a drill serves to:
 - Orient participants to SEMS and NIMS by becoming familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies that would respond to a major incident
 - Identify many of the assets already in place in the community
 - Engage the community members with the members of the appropriate public agencies
 - Identify the major gaps in planning, response, and recovery phases
- **Conduct a community analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)** – A SWOT analysis can assist Task Force members in identifying additional assets and planning gaps. Joint teams of community members and public agency representatives can be assigned to specific neighborhoods to conduct this assessment. The findings of the SWOT analysis and the results of the tabletop, drill, and other exercises combine to determine the work plan of each Work Group.
- **Assess public agency plans** – Simultaneously with this SWOT analysis, the public agencies should assess both their current plans and the level of coordination that exists with the plans of other agencies

against realistic disaster scenarios. This assessment should focus on the primary first response agencies but should also include agencies that have peripheral responsibilities and resources. Because the County departments have been engaged in emergency planning for many years, the County departments have plans in place. These plans require review to ensure they are current, reflect current practices and technologies, and are coordinated with other departments as they relate to specific unincorporated areas. This assumption, however, should be reconfirmed for each community and geographic area undertaking emergency planning. (Other steps elaborate further on the need for common terminology, maps, etc.) As part of this assessment, it should be determined if the community would benefit from a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program and training, particularly in case of earthquakes.

Best Practice

- ✱ ***Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations***
- ✱ ***Identify all key stakeholders – within the community, the County, other government agencies, and other nonprofit and business partners (e.g., cable companies, utilities, American Red Cross)***
- ✱ ***Conduct a cross-departmental assessment of current plans and disaster-response capabilities***

Step 4 – Develop the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and the supporting documents

The requirements of each community ERP may be unique to some degree; however, the following concepts should be considered as part of the ERP.

- ***Develop a unified tactical response plan*** – The ERP planning process must involve the Sheriff, Fire, and other responding departments. Currently, the Thomas Guide provides the basis for a common map to plan tactical response zones; the County is developing community boundary maps, which should be used once completed. This will enable coordination of evacuation and response plans, reduce the potential for confusion, and provide guidance to first responders outside of the unincorporated area.
- ***Identify the appropriate types of shelters, depending on the type of disaster*** – The strategies for optimal shelters will vary, depending on the type of disaster. In some cases, such as bioterrorism, an earthquake, or chemical spills, the County officials (i.e., the Incident

Commander) may advise residents to shelter in place. In those cases, residents should have a minimum of ten days of supplies stocked.

In the event of a fire or other disasters, the Incident Commander may advise residents to evacuate to safe locations and regional shelters outside of the affected area, such as shelters established by the American Red Cross. Such safe locations should be able to accommodate the number of people and vehicles that would result from a large-scale evacuation.

In extremely rare fire situations, there may be insufficient lead-time to evacuate outside of the area, even though the circumstances dictate mandatory evacuation. In some communities, given the topography, population density, and other factors, it may be impossible to evacuate all residents and visitors. In such situations, the Fire Department, with the written approval of the Fire Chief, may designate special areas. This approach builds on the safety zone concept developed by fire-fighting agencies. The national standard for a safety zone is approximately a 400-foot circle that is clear of vegetation; other standards may differ depending on the location of a fire, terrain, amount of vegetation, etc.

In addition, the Fire Department has developed two new concepts – Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas – that it may determine are appropriate to apply, depending on an unincorporated area's circumstances. Moreover, the Fire Department and the relevant ERPs should:

- Give public lands the first priority as potential Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas
- Ensure that the private property owners' rights to develop their land are not constrained by this designation
- Require the Fire Department re-verify each year the identified Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas

Residents should not use Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas if, during a mandatory evacuation, there is sufficient lead-time for everyone to evacuate outside of the affected community.

- ***Community Safety Areas.*** The Fire Department can identify open spaces that can shelter several hundred people each. Large spaces that meet the Fire Department's defined standards can be designated as Community Safety Areas. In communities with confined spaces, the Fire Department may identify spaces as Community Safety Areas, which might be smaller than safety zones and, therefore, do not meet the national safety zone standards.

The Fire Department must obtain the property owners' written permission in Letters of Consent to use such designated

properties.³ In the event of a disaster, the Incident Commander can activate the use of such Community Safety Areas and may need to commandeer such private property or other properties to save lives. The Fire Department should ensure these sites are among the locations that are given priority for deployment of resources during a disaster.

In addition, the communities will require Fire Department logistics plans for using the Community Safety Areas. The logistics plan should address parking, facility layouts, emergency supplies, communication plans, and emergency procedures customized for each site.

Finally, Community Safety Areas do not guarantee safe haven but are preferable to Neighborhood Survival Areas or sheltering in place if orders are to evacuate and evacuation is not feasible.

- ***Neighborhood Survival Areas.*** The Fire Department developed the Neighborhood Survival Area concept. The Fire Department identifies such areas based on their extensive knowledge of the locale and the potential difficulties in evacuating everyone safely during a fire. The Fire Department might pre-identify these Neighborhood Survival Areas in the relevant ERPs. Similar to the Community Safety Areas, Neighborhood Survival Areas are typically unimproved areas with minimal vegetation.

Residents are only to use such sites if they cannot evacuate to a safe location or reach a Community Safety Area within the community. The Fire Department must notify property owners that their properties have been designated as potential sites for Neighborhood Survival Areas and work with these owners to ensure the selected sites have appropriate brush clearance. Similar to the Community Safety Areas, the Fire Department must obtain the property owners' written permission in Letters of Consent to designate their properties in this way.⁴

There may be some residents who can only evacuate to a Community Safety Area or a Neighborhood Survival Area rather than a safe location/regional shelter outside of the hazard area. During an emergency, some residents may not comply with the instructions they have been given; for example, some individuals may choose to evacuate to a Community Safety Area or a Neighborhood Survival Area rather than a safe location/regional shelter outside of the hazard area. It is also possible that residents who comply may still incur serious injury, death, or property damage due to the inherent risks associated with the emergency event itself. In any of these cases, responding agencies are

³ County Counsel is developing Letters of Consent to obtain the expressed written consent of property owners to designate and use private properties as Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas.

⁴ See prior footnote.

exposed to potential claims, resulting from alleged or actual negligent acts or omissions in their performance during the emergency.

Responding agencies can limit potential liability by ensuring that their personnel follow approved agency procedures, including advising property owners and the public that: 1) there are certain inherent risks associated with emergency events and thus it is not possible to eliminate all risk, regardless of the care taken by agencies to protect the public from injury; and 2) failure to follow instructions concerning the use of Community Safety Area or Neighborhood Survival Area sites may result in minor or major injury, including death, to non-compliant parties and others.⁵

In the event of a liability claim, the County will charge those costs back to the "responsible" department via the Insurance/Judgments and Damages budget.

- ***Ensure the unincorporated area ERP and RP dovetails with the County ERP and RP*** – This step also requires similar coordination with State and Federal plans.
- ***Identify the roles and plans for all schools in the community*** – Traditionally, communities use their local schools as residential assembly points during and after emergencies. During the planning process, the Task Force should confirm that the schools are still available for this use. New laws and regulations and expanded enrollments may limit the viability of schools as assembly points.⁶ Private schools should also have emergency management plans that the Sheriff monitors. The Task Force should ensure that all schools are in compliance.
- ***Customize and formalize local and regional traffic management plans*** – Many factors will influence the planning for traffic management in each community. A customized and formally agreed-to local and regional traffic management plan is necessary to enable rapid ingress for responders from outside the area and efficient egress for residents in the case of an evacuation order. For Topanga Canyon, the multiple agencies involved in response situations, the multiple agencies that have jurisdiction over the streets and roads, and the complexity of the geography made this planning essential. Other unincorporated areas with complex roadways will require a detailed tactic for traffic management planning purposes.
- ***Determine evacuation routes for each neighborhood*** – Along with the system of shelters and the traffic management plan, evacuation

⁵ Liability risks must be weighed against predictions of lives saved, or lost. Once the potential liability and risks are defined, the County should involve property owners and determine whether or not to implement this approach.

⁶ The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has a thorough emergency management plan, which is available to be used as a template for other public and private schools.

routes should be determined and communicated to each neighborhood. There may be primary and secondary routes depending on the geography, designation by experts, and varying conditions during a disaster.

- ***Plan for use of existing private and public resources*** – One of the greatest lessons learned from the response to Hurricane Katrina is that government response may be delayed, especially in a regional disaster. A community could be isolated for a number of days. Each community needs to assess its resources to respond independently, if required, and to help begin the response and recovery processes. Resources include medical personnel and supplies, heavy equipment and operators, communication equipment, food and water supplies, and transportation.
- ***Plan for needed signage and barricades*** – The type of signage needed can involve evacuation routes, shelters, street level indicators for shelter sites, and road closures. Any Work Groups assessing needed signage should be aware of the broad Federal, State, and County regulations and requirements affecting signage decisions. Some communities may also need to address special needs, such as barricades and the storage and pre-deployment of signs and barricades at strategic locations.
- ***Review and update current mutual aid plans and agreements*** – The planning process needs to include an updated plan that will ensure the most efficient process for requesting and mobilizing resources stationed outside of the disaster area. The Los Angeles County Fire Chief is designated as the Region I Coordinator, responsible for the overall coordination and dispatch of mutual aid fire and rescue resources during major emergencies. The Sheriff assumes a similar role in law enforcement. All new or modifications to existing mutual aid plans and agreements must go through a formal County review process, starting with the respective department head (e.g., the Sheriff or Fire Chief or their designee), and approval by the Board of Supervisors, as required.
- ***Identify appropriate emergency notification systems*** – The Sheriff manages the County's Emergency Alert System. The development of other complementary emergency notification systems is critical for improving the County's ability to respond to major disasters. The unique geography of each community will determine what notification systems are feasible in each area. The Task Force should research on an on-going basis the most appropriate notification systems. Other solutions to notification issues, including low frequency radios and sirens, should also be considered.
- ***Develop plans for animal evacuation*** – In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, animals were left behind, often with owners who would not leave them. It quickly became clear that any emergency management plan must address both large and small animal evacuation. Animal

hospitals and other sites outside the community should be identified to handle small animals in case of evacuation.

Best Practices

- ✧ *Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations*
- ✧ *Develop a unified tactical response plan for the Sheriff, Fire, and other responding Departments/Agencies*
- ✧ *Identify the appropriate types of shelters*
- ✧ *Identify the roles and plans for all schools in the community*
- ✧ *Customize and formalize local and regional traffic management plans involving all appropriate State and local transportation and law enforcement agencies*
- ✧ *Determine evacuation routes for each neighborhood*
- ✧ *Analyze and plan for use of existing public and private resources, including community expertise, in disaster response*
- ✧ *Identify the needs for signage prior to and during emergencies and determine how to provide, install, store, and deploy signage*
- ✧ *Review and update current mutual aid plans and agreements to request and mobilize resources stationed outside of the disaster area*
- ✧ *Identify appropriate additional emergency notification systems*
- ✧ *Develop plans for animal evacuation*

Step 5 – Develop the Recovery Plan (RP) for the unincorporated area

The CAO is the County's lead agency in charge of the coordination of the recovery effort. All County departments are involved in business continuity and recovery for their respective areas.

Development of an unincorporated area RP can occur while the planning and response plans are being put in place, which would decrease the timeline for developing the overall plan. Other County agencies also have key roles and plans in place to assist with the recovery process in unincorporated areas. In the aftermath of a disaster, DPSS is designated as the Los Angeles County Area Branch Coordinator for Care and Shelter. DPSS discharges this responsibility in cooperation with the Red Cross and support from other

County departments assigned to support DPSS, local cities, County Office of Education, Salvation Army, California Department of Social Services, and Federal agencies as designated in the Federal Response Plan.

DPSS manages a rapid deployment team responding from various agencies through the Emergency Network LA (ENLA). They typically establish a primary location, which is most often a regional shelter located outside of the affected area. Some of the services are available to all people impacted by the disaster; others are income-based. Residents would be encouraged to visit and determine the services they qualify for.

Community groups can help disseminate the information – where to go or whom to call to receive assistance. The official information may come from multiple sources, such as the U.S. Federal Government, OEM, cities, the media, and other groups. The community-focused RP should:

- Identify the needs that will be facing the community after each type of potential disaster or emergency
- Identify the resources available from all sources, including community, private sector, and all levels of government
- Identify the qualification requirements for various types of short-, medium-, and long-term aid
- Assist community members to understand what documentation is necessary for applying for disaster relief
- Assist the community to cope with the aftermath of disasters
- Be in compliance with SEMS and NIMS

Because FEMA has changed its benefits, programs, and procedures since the Northridge earthquake in 1994 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, residents should ensure they obtain the latest information on FEMA. The County's 2-1-1 information telephone line can also be adapted in the aftermath of a disaster.

Best Practices

Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations

Step 6 – Develop and implement a public education and outreach plan for both the ERP and RP

Once plans – the ERP, RP, or supporting plan documents – are agreed to, the process of communicating the plans becomes paramount.

Unincorporated areas should not wait until all the plans are developed to begin the communication process. For example, unincorporated areas can learn about the ERP contents while the RP is being developed.

The communication process needs to involve public and governmental agencies. The audiences for these messages are diverse. They include: residents, non-resident property owners, business owners, employees of community businesses, visitors, non-English speaking people, people who are disabled and require assistance in an evacuation situation, and animal and pet owners. Each audience needs messages customized to their needs.

Public agency audiences include first-responder departments that are used to developing their messages and communicating them within their own agencies. The challenge of coordinated planning is that the communication of the results of the planning must be coordinated as well. Agencies must develop an "institutional memory" so that, despite changes in leadership, coordination continues.

Some communication strategies involve:

- Emergency preparedness plans, including ERPs and RPs
- Community public outreach programs and documents, such as survival guides, to educate and prepare the community for potential disasters
- Websites, newsletters, 2-1-1, and County Channel
- Neighborhood meetings
- Emergency preparedness fairs
- Local newspaper articles
- Routine training in SEMS, NIMS, and emergency readiness
- Ongoing training of first responders regarding the communications plans

The public education and outreach plan or program may be affected by the input of the various review groups, outlined in Step 8, and the adopted ERP and RP. As a result, the public education and outreach plan may require some modification to incorporate any changes.

Survival guides are viewed as public outreach documents and typically are not official parts of the ERPs. Therefore, survival guides generally do not need to go through the ERP review process, unless specified in the ERP. County Counsel and CAO/Risk Management should review the contents of the survival guides.

Finally, the decisions and Best Practices developed in this planning process must be institutionalized. Such institutionalization can best occur by documenting them in on-going training and briefings of first responders from outside the area during a disaster. These materials must be written, customized, and community-specific.

Best Practices

- ★ ***Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations***

- ★ *Communicate emergency response and evacuation plans ahead of time to residents, first responders, mutual aid agencies, and likely Incident Commanders*
- ★ *Ensure clear communication with local communities about disaster preparedness and response*
- ★ *Provide ongoing training within and across departments*
- ★ *Develop written customized briefing materials for first responders from outside the area*

Step 7 – Evaluate the plans through tabletops, drills, and exercises

Three activities are the primary methods of evaluation:

- **Conduct a concluding tabletop, drill, or other exercise** – Once a draft of the plan is written, the Task Force should conduct a final test of the procedures in the plan. Such tabletops, drills, or other exercises will help to identify any gaps in the plan that have not yet been addressed.
- **Establish the on-going advisory body** – OEM has primary responsibility for ongoing evaluation and review of emergency management plans. In unincorporated areas where more active community involvement is needed, the Task Force can transition into an on-going advisory body charged, among other assignments, with the evaluation and updating of the community emergency management plan.
- **Conduct incident debriefings** – After emergency situations, the Task Force should conduct a debriefing of the performance of involved people and agencies in relation to the plan. This may result in changes to the plan or the mutual aid approach. If the incident is “minor,” the Task Force can work with first responders to conduct the debriefing. If the incident is “major,” joint Task Force members might be convened to debrief the incident and determine if changes to the plan are needed.

Best Practices

- ★ *Build on the existing capabilities within the community and its established organizations*
- ★ *Conduct regular tabletop exercises, drills, and exercises with involved community, County, and other participants to identify gaps*

Step 8 – Obtain formal approval of the developed plans

Any plans developed that involve the County – whether emergency management, response, preparedness, mitigation, or recovery – require County approval. The process for obtaining plan approval involves:

- **Operational Area Advisory Board (OAAB)** – The OAAB consists of primarily first responders and other stakeholders throughout the County. The OAAB would review the original draft and provide input on operational issues.
- **Emergency Management Council (EMC) Subcommittee** – The plan(s) would be presented to and reviewed by the County's Subcommittee of the Emergency Management Council (EMC). The Subcommittee members review the plan(s), brief their department heads, and give comments or recommendations for needed changes.
- **EMC Review** – Once comments are received and addressed from the Subcommittee, the plans are forwarded to the EMC for review. The EMC includes the following key department heads involved in emergency situations:
 - 1) Fire
 - 2) Sheriff
 - 3) CAO
 - 4) DPW
 - 5) Coroner
 - 6) DPSS
 - 7) Internal Services Department (ISD)
 - 8) Department of Health Services (DHS)
 - 9) Department of Mental Health (DMH)

The EMC will either approve the plan(s) or request changes to be made. If the revised plan(s) are approved, the EMC recommends to the Board of Supervisors that the plan(s) are ready for formal adoption. If disapproved, the plan(s) are referred back to the plan writers and Task Force to make the necessary changes; the process then starts over with the OAAB, EMC Subcommittee, and EMC reviews.

- **Board of Supervisors** – As the Operational Area (OA) Coordinator for the County of Los Angeles, the Board of Supervisors has the authority to approve such plans. If the Board of Supervisors disapproves the plan(s), they are referred back to the EMC and the Subcommittee for further refinements.

Best Practice

- ★ ***Ensure emergency management plans that require County involvement obtain the necessary County approvals***

Step 9 – Identify best means to review and update plans

An approach for maintaining the plan is needed and should also be outlined in the plan. As mentioned previously, OEM has primary responsibility for the evaluation and review of ERPs and RPs. To institutionalize the emergency management planning process further, several actions are beneficial:

- The County continues to engage the community in the planning process
- Tabletop exercises, drills, and other exercises occur regularly to reinforce the importance of these plans, allow individuals and groups (e.g., CERT members) to remain current and familiar with the plans, and engage the major stakeholders involved in emergency management in the unincorporated area
- Plans are regularly evaluated and updated every three years or sooner, if necessary

An advisory “body” could also be charged with on-going communication and education of the community, and ensure continued coordination between and among agencies and organizations. Not all unincorporated areas are alike. Therefore, the preferred advisory body structure may vary from unincorporated area to area and should be determined with input from OEM and County Counsel. Some of the potential advisory body options the County is exploring are:

- A Municipal Advisory Council (MAC), specifically dedicated to emergency preparedness and response, with community and public agencies represented
- A Fire Safe Council, a partnership with public agencies, community bodies, and corporations, which typically focuses on public outreach regarding fire prevention education materials
- Town councils, community coordinating councils, or community advisory councils as the Task Force
- Informal public-private sector collaborative initiatives, possibly through an ongoing Task Force
- The County taking the lead, coordinated through OEM and the Fire and Sheriff Departments
- Coordination through the existing Area Operational Committee

⁷ As per State of California recommendations.

Best Practice

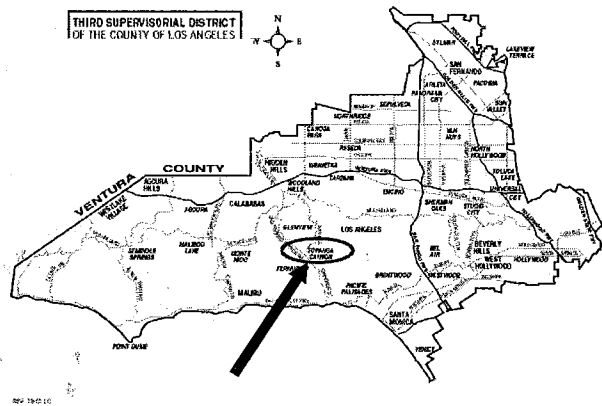
- ✦ ***Distribute plans to the community and other stakeholders***
- ✦ ***Conduct regular tabletop exercises, drills, and exercises with involved community, County, and other participants to identify gaps***

CASE STUDY: TOPANGA CANYON PILOT PROJECT

PILOT PROJECT BACKGROUND

In April 2000, OUAS began to implement the County's Strategic Plan for Municipal Services for Unincorporated Areas. Five communities were chosen to pilot one of eight models to improve the delivery of municipal services to the more than 1 million residents who live in unincorporated communities in the County of Los Angeles.

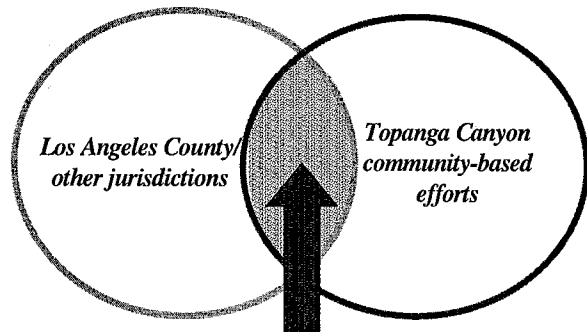
Topanga Canyon, in the Third Supervisorial District, was chosen as the pilot location for Action Plan F, the Emergency Management Planning for Unincorporated Areas. This community of more than 10,000 people is uniquely vulnerable to fast-moving wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides. The goal of this effort was to create a joint disaster survival guide that would be customized to the needs and unique circumstances of the Topanga community.



OEM staff, OUAS staff, and the Board Office of the Third District convened a meeting with Topanga Canyon community leaders in late 2002 and began work on the emergency planning project. This group evolved into the current Steering Committee; County Departments (including Sheriff, Fire, Public Works, and Animal Care) joined the community leaders, the CAO staff, and the Third District staff.

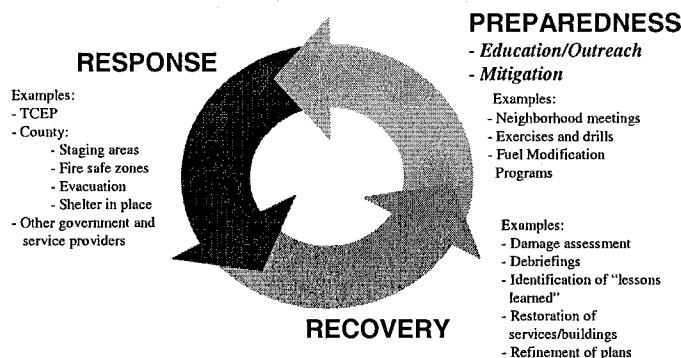
The approach to developing a disaster survival guide was divided into three phases: response, preparedness, and recovery. The Task Force decided to focus initially on response, realizing that issues pertaining to preparedness or recovery might also arise.

EMERGENCY PLANNING OVERLAP



The area of overlap was the focus of the workshop.

THREE PHASES OF EMERGENCY PLANNING



EVALUATION OF GUIDES

When Topanga Canyon conducted its concluding tabletop exercise, the drill identified several gaps in planning, which resulted in a more effective guide. In June 2003, the Steering Committee conducted a tabletop exercise involving approximately 100 representatives from community organizations, County departments, State agencies, and private companies involved in areas such as utilities and communications. This workshop identified major gaps in the response planning. As a result, in February 2004, the Steering Committee convened two Work Groups:

- Planning & Response
- Communication, Education, & Collaboration

Each Work Group is composed of approximately 25 members who represent the community and applicable public and private organizations.

PILOT PROJECT APPROACH

This Case Study documents the Topanga Canyon process and identifies best practices. The following principles formed the approach to this project:

- Engage the community and appropriate public agencies to identify gaps in the planning and communication processes
- Build on the assets already in place in Topanga Canyon
- Solicit a strong commitment from all involved stakeholders
- Provide unincorporated areas with community-specific emergency planning that is currently provided by cities for their residents

WIDESPREAD COMMUNITY AND COUNTY INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer members of the Topanga Canyon community and representatives of numerous County and other governmental agencies worked side-by-side to develop a comprehensive, community-specific, disaster survival guide. This guide will improve coordination and result in faster, more effective

response by the Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, Public Works, American Red Cross, and other critical first responders.

During the last two years, two Work Groups and a Steering Committee developed a customized guide and a number of Best Practices and tools, including:

- Process-oriented best practices
- Specific tools to improve coordination between first responders and between County departments and other levels of government
- Internal operational plans for individual departments and agencies

These Best Practices and tools were instrumental in developing The Topanga Canyon Survival Guide (Survival Guide), this Planning Guide, and the ERP and RP for Topanga Canyon (which are currently being drafted).

Emergency response planners understand the importance of identifying financial and physical assets and ensuring plans are in place for their most effective use. Even before the lessons from Hurricane Katrina began to emerge, planners realized that Topanga Canyon would need to be prepared to respond to a disaster situation without much outside help in the immediate aftermath. Such a situation would be especially true in the event of a major earthquake that affected the entire region.

Topanga Canyon has tremendous organizational and human resources, many of which were tapped in this process. Because of the frequency of natural disasters affecting Topanga Canyon, especially wildfires, the community has several organizations in place that focus on disaster planning, response, and recovery. Prominent among them is the Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (T-CEP). Other related organizations include Arson Watch, CERT, Disaster Response Team (DRT), and T-CEP Equine Education Team. Representatives from these groups were integral and essential resources in the process. These community members devoted countless hours of volunteer time and shared their expertise and passion to benefit the entire Topanga Canyon community.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY AND MAPS

Topanga Canyon was concerned about developing a unified tactical response plan with common terminology and maps. Therefore, Topanga Canyon applied the incident command model used in SEMS and NIMS. For Topanga Canyon emergency planning, all agencies adopted the Thomas Guide for refining the standard planning zones.

EVACUATION SITES

Because of limited highway access to the Topanga Canyon community, it will be difficult to evacuate all residents and visitors in an emergency, especially a wildfire. The first priority, however, remains evacuation to a safe location outside the Canyon. The Steering Committee worked with the Red Cross to identify a Regional Shelter in Pacific Palisades that can accommodate the

large number of people and vehicles that would result from a large-scale evacuation.

For those people who cannot safely leave the Canyon, nine Community Safety Areas⁸, designed to shelter several hundred people each, have been designated. The Fire Department plans have been coordinated with this designation. These areas will be among the locations that are given priority for deployment of resources during a disaster.

In addition, 38 Neighborhood Survival Areas⁹ have been identified. These are to be used only if residents cannot evacuate Topanga Canyon to a safe location outside the Canyon or reach a Community Safety Area within the Canyon.

County Counsel is developing Letters of Consent to obtain the express written consent of property owners to designate and use private properties as Community Safety Areas or Neighborhood Survival Areas.

ROLE OF THE TOPANGA CANYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE

In the past, the community has used Topanga Canyon Elementary School as a residential assembly point during and after emergencies. This will no longer be the case. Many difficult decisions had to be made about the use of the school in a future emergency. It has been designated as a School Shelter with special requirements and restrictions based on State law and school district regulations.

Besides laws and regulations, the location of the school in the heart of Topanga Canyon posed obstacles. Evacuation of children by parents will, more than likely, result in traffic congestion that will close off the only evacuation route for residents north of the school. Therefore, people arriving at the school will be allowed to remain there but will not be able to leave until law enforcement personnel determine that it is safe to do so.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has a thorough emergency management plan. Based on the LAUSD plan, the Topanga Canyon Elementary School emergency plan is distributed to parents and is the subject of a parent education evening at the school. In addition, the LAUSD plan is available to be used as a template for other public and private schools.

⁸ Topanga Canyon does not have sites with sufficient open space to have designated safety zones that meet national standards; therefore, the Fire Department identified Community Safety Areas.

⁹ Similarly, Topanga Canyon does not have sites with sufficient open space to have designated Neighborhood Survival Zones; therefore, the Fire Department identified Neighborhood Survival Areas.

PRIVATE SCHOOL PLANS

Private schools present their own set of issues. Each needs to have an emergency management plan that is monitored by the Sheriff's Department. In Topanga Canyon, not all schools were in compliance, so efforts are currently underway to work with these schools and the appropriate County agencies to review and update the plans as needed.

CUSTOMIZED LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLANS AND EVACUATION ROUTES, BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Just as the location of the Topanga Canyon Elementary School poses difficulties for both evacuation and emergency response, other unique factors influence planning for traffic management in Topanga. The multiple agencies involved in response situations, the multiple agencies that have jurisdiction over the streets and roads, and the complexity of the geography made this planning essential. Planning between agencies has begun but the process is still ongoing.

Working with the Fire and Sheriff Departments, the Work Group participants identified three potential primary evacuation routes and specific evacuation routes for each neighborhood. Other roads have switchbacks, gates, and other obstacles that could place people in more danger if used. Therefore, their use is not encouraged.

PREPARATION FOR POTENTIALLY DELAYED RESPONSE

The ability for government agencies to respond may be delayed, especially in a regional disaster. A community such as Topanga Canyon could be isolated for a number of days. Therefore, residents should prepare for at least ten days in the event of a disaster.

TOPANGA CANYON SIGNAGE

A great deal of attention was devoted to signage issues in Topanga Canyon. The type of signage needed included evacuation routes, shelters, street level indicators for shelter sites, and road closures. Because of broad Federal, State, and County regulations and requirements affecting signage decisions, a separate subgroup worked on these issues and involved appropriate agencies at various stages. In addition, plans were developed for needed barricades and the storage and pre-deployment of signs and barricades at strategic locations.

MUTUAL AID PLANS AND AGREEMENTS

In the case of Topanga Canyon, the Los Angeles Fire and the Los Angeles Police Departments and LAUSD may have resources that can respond more quickly than additional County resources from outlying areas of the County. Thus, the Fire Department should ensure existing plans are continually reviewed and updated to ensure the fastest and most efficient deployment of County and other resources during a disaster.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

In Topanga Canyon, a system involving the T-CEP hotline and web site, Family Radios Service (FRS)¹⁰ in neighborhoods, and American Emergency Networks (AENs)¹¹ alerts residents to emergency situations.

SMALL AND LARGE ANIMAL EVACUATION

The issue of evacuation of animals was a concern for Topanga Canyon long before Hurricane Katrina. A Topanga Canyon task force formalized a system of large animal evacuation that is tied to emergency evacuation warnings and orders. Working with the equine community, expectations about assistance in evacuating horses are being clarified. In addition, animal hospitals and other sites outside the community are being identified to handle small animals in case of evacuation.

RECOVERY PLAN (RP)

OEM is the lead agency in charge of Recovery in the County of Los Angeles. Various County agencies (such as DPSS, discussed earlier) also have supportive plans and roles in the recovery process.

In the Topanga Canyon planning process, the Recovery phase remains the last piece to develop. The Survival Guide addresses some of the frequently asked disaster assistance questions, such as:

- How do I apply for disaster assistance?
- How can I get in touch with my family?
- What if my home is destroyed?
- Where can I get food and water following a disaster?
- What if I lost my job or can't work because of a disaster?
- What if I think I need legal help?

The Steering Committee formed two Work Groups that will continue to work on this phase. Some of the specific Recovery areas that require more planning in the Topanga Canyon community are:

- **Traffic Control Plan** – A Traffic Control Plan needs to be further refined, developed, and codified with the County's Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, and DPW; and such involved State agencies as CALTRANS and CHP.
- **Coordinated Medical Response Plan** – Strategies are needed to: coordinate available medical resources immediately following a disaster; handle residents who are medically fragile; and develop an updated

¹⁰ Note: FRS radios are compact, handheld, wireless, two-way radios that provide clarity over a relatively short range. FRS radios operate on any of 14 dedicated channels (1-14), designed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expressly for FRS radio use.

¹¹ Formerly Community Alert Networks (CANs).

database of resources in the Canyon, including physicians, mental health practitioners, chiropractors, nurses, etc.

- **Public-Private Partnership for Using Equipment, Operators, and Resources to Activate During a Disaster** – This collaboration involves: a) a coordinated response plan using both public and community resources (e.g., equipment, operators) during an emergency and recovery; and b) an updated database of resources in the Canyon, including construction equipment, operators of such equipment, etc.
- **Communication of Evacuation-Shelter Options for Hard-to-Reach Populations** – This initiative focuses on the need to develop a method of clearly communicating shelter and evacuation information to hard-to-reach populations (e.g., day laborers, hikers (via Arson Watch), domestic help, homeless, etc.); the non-English speaking population; and other potentially isolated groups.
- **Government Media Strategy** – The objective of this strategy is to: a) improve and define communications formally between government and Charter Cable (and satellite providers); b) ensure an emergency alert system is in place with Charter Cable, satellite TV providers, and radio stations; and c) develop a strategy to work with the media, including Charter Cable and Satellite companies, to provide EAS systems. The recently approved County Channel should also be used in the event of emergencies.
- **DPSS's lead role in recovery** – As discussed earlier, DPSS is designated as the Los Angeles County OA Branch Coordinator for Care and Shelter. (Note: Appendix A elaborates on DPSS's recovery role.)

The outcome of this effort should be a Recovery Guide, which outlines the steps, in simple checklist format, for residents to use after the disaster has occurred. Recovery steps may vary, depending on the size and type of disaster (fire, flood, earthquake). The Recovery Guide will take into consideration the differences in recovery in the short term (food, water, shelter, medical needs for survival of humans, animals, pets); medium term (transition from shelters); and long term.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PLANS

For Topanga Canyon, the communication process to the community included several methods of communication. The first is The Topanga Disaster Survival Guide (Survival Guide). This graphically appealing booklet was distributed to all residents and businesses in the Canyon. It contains emergency preparedness information that is customized to the Topanga Canyon community and includes emergency evacuation routes and procedures, as well as maps illustrating the Community Safety Areas and Neighborhood Survival Areas.

Another means of communication is the website www.topangasurvival.org. This site provides additional copies of the Survival Guide, as well as copies of

the forms to be used to develop individual family emergency plans. Key portions of the Survival Guide are available in Spanish on the website. Future plans for the website include establishing links to emergency preparedness and other resource organizations, as well as articles providing more details about specific topics in the Survival Guide, such as preparation for equine and other animal evacuation.

In addition, the Survival Guide has become a vehicle to further neighborhood conversations and planning. Neighborhood meetings, conducted by both community representatives and first responders, have been held throughout the Canyon. The results of these meetings are organized guides for each neighborhood.

In September 2005, the Survival Guide was announced at a press conference held during a community emergency preparedness fair. Several hundred people enjoyed the displays, demonstrations, and materials provided by public agencies and private vendors.

Additionally, the local newspaper has given significant coverage to planning efforts and emergency preparedness messages. A weekly column titled, "Topanga Tim" offers advice to residents through stories of real life disasters.

EVALUATION OF SURVIVAL GUIDE

Topanga Canyon's concluding tabletop exercise identified several gaps in planning and resulted in a much more effective plan. The gaps were found in such topics as:

- Planning for the safety of small pets and animals
- The need to work with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure the local businesses develop their own emergency response plans, taking into consideration their customers and employees
- A coordinated medical response plan to help residents who are medically fragile
- A traffic control plan that would be codified with CALTRANS, CHP, the Sheriff, and the Fire Department
- The potential use of community-based equipment, operators, and resources to activate during an emergency
- Communication of evacuation shelter options for hard-to-reach populations (e.g., day laborers, non-English speaking individuals, hikers, domestic help, homeless individuals, etc.)
- An advisory structure that meets OEM criteria to sustain efforts and ensure timely updates and communications
- Recovery guide
- Government media strategy

COUNTY REVIEW OF ERP AND RP DOCUMENTS

The Fire Department is currently preparing the ERP and RP for Topanga Canyon. ERPs are developed as drafts until approved through the County system, which requires reviews by OEM, OUAS, County Counsel, Risk

Management, OAAB, and EMC (and its Subcommittee). The Board of Supervisors has the final and ultimate approval authority.

Public outreach materials do not need to go through this technical review process. In the case of Topanga Canyon, as a pilot project, the Fire Department, Sheriff's Department, DPW, County Counsel, Risk Management, OUAS, OEM, and other County agencies reviewed both the Survival Guide and this document. The EMC Subcommittee has also reviewed this Planning Guide, which is scheduled for a full EMC review in August 2006.

ONGOING SUPPORT, ADVISORY INPUT, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EMERGENCY PLANNING EFFORTS

The County is exploring with the Topanga Canyon community various options to sustain emergency planning initiatives. Among the options being considered are: a) the establishment of an Emergency Management Municipal Advisory Council (EM-MAC) and b) a Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council model may have too narrow of a focus on only public outreach regarding fire prevention education materials for Topanga Canyon. The Topanga Canyon community is working on other emergency-related issues (in addition to fire) and is actively involved in response, not just education and public outreach. The Topanga Canyon community will coordinate with and seek the approval of County Counsel and OEM for the final advisory body structure.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE TOPANGA CANYON PLANNING PROCESS

American Red Cross
Arson Watch
Board of Supervisors – Third District
California Highway Patrol (CHP)
California State Parks
CALTRANS
Chamber of Commerce
Charter Communications
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
Federal Emergency Management Agency
KH Consulting Group (KH)¹²
Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office (CAO):
 Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
 Office of Unincorporated Area Services (OUAS)
Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care & Control
Los Angeles County Department of Community & Senior Services
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services – Public Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works:
 Road Maintenance
 Building & Safety
 Waterworks District
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Los Angeles County Sheriff Department
Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
Resource Conservation District
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)
State Office of Emergency Services (OES)
Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (T-CEP):
 T-CEP Disaster Radio Team
 T-CEP Equine Education Team
 T-CEP Neighborhood Network
Topanga Elementary School
Topanga Town Council
Watershed Committee

¹² Strategic planning consultants retained by the County to assist in facilitating the community engagement process.

COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The definition of a disaster or emergency includes any condition that results in peril to the safety and lives of persons or destruction of property. Examples of natural disasters or emergencies include earthquakes, floods, mudslides, and brush fires. Examples of man-made disasters or emergencies include terrorism, civil unrest, hazardous materials spills, residential or industrial fires, and air disasters.

The following are brief synopses of County departments' responsibilities during an emergency or major disaster. All departments serve as potential resources for finance and administration during such events.

EMC DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES

The EMC includes the following department heads from departments, involved in disaster and emergency situations. The departments are listed alphabetically.

✓ **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE (CAO) – OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (OEM)**

Chapter 2.68 of the County Code established the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) with responsibility for organizing and directing the preparedness efforts of the Emergency Management Organization of Los Angeles County. OEM is the day-to-day Los Angeles County Operational Area (OA) coordinator for the County's entire geographic area.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) serves as the EMC Chair and is Director of the OEM. The CAO is charged with other duties and responsibilities, as defined in the Emergency Ordinance, in coordination of Countywide emergency preparedness activities, response at the Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC), and cost-recovery efforts following major emergencies and disasters.

✓ **CORONER**

The California Government Code Section 27491 et.seq. mandates that the Coroner inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner, and cause of all violent, sudden, or unusual deaths, including all homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, and natural deaths where the decedent has not seen a physician within 20 days prior to death. Only the Coroner will release the number of fatalities, names, and cause of death after the Coroner or his appointed deputy has notified the Next of Kin.

In a major disaster, the Coroner activates the Emergency Mortuary Response Plan, and will work with key agencies in establishing a Death Notification Center, Mass Fatality Collection Points, and the dissemination of information according to protocols.

√ FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Department's mission is to "proudly protect lives and property and the environment providing prompt, skillful, and cost-effective protection and life safety services." The Fire Department's role in emergency response management has increased dramatically as new threats and complexities have challenged our communities. As the principal provider of fire protection and life safety services for the citizens of Los Angeles County, the Fire Department responds to emergencies of all types: fires, floods, earthquakes, wild land fires, hazardous materials incidents, civil disturbances, emergency medical rescues, Urban Search and Rescue incidents, ocean lifeguard rescues, and other risks to human lives and the community. In large-scale emergencies, the Fire Department, either solely or in unified command, will take a central role in the overall management of disasters, such as earthquakes, civil unrest, terrorism, and other threats to the citizens of the County of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County Fire Chief is designated as the Region I Coordinator and is primarily responsible for the overall coordination and dispatch of mutual aid fire and rescue resources during major emergencies.

√ HEALTH SERVICES

The Director of Health Services, as the Operational Area (OA) Coordinator, is responsible for the Countywide management and allocation of medical and health resources – both public and private. The mission of the Department of Health Services (DHS) during disaster response conditions is to provide for the medical and health needs of the population of the Los Angeles County OA by organizing, mobilizing, coordinating, and directing public and private medical and health resources. DHS coordinates disaster response through its Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA). EMSA's main responsibility is to coordinate the flow of injured patients into and through hospitals, working with ambulance providers to direct transports to the most appropriate facilities (avoiding closed hospitals). EMSA is in charge of any hospital evacuation and associated patient transfer.

EMSA coordinates the deployment of additional medical resources through the Disaster Management Assistance Teams (DMATs). DMATs coordinate the availability of mental health resources as needed. At the County Emergency Operation Center level, DMATs coordinate with those responsible for "care & shelter" to manage medical and health issues at shelters.

DHS is unique in that a majority of its medical response capability is provided by private sector health facilities. These facilities include hospitals, clinics, and skilled nursing facilities that may also be designated as Casualty Collection Point (CCP) sites to handle mass casualties.

√ **INTERNAL SERVICES**

During disaster response conditions, the Internal Services Department (ISD) gathers safety assessment information relative to County facilities and reports their status to the CEOC. Additionally, ISD must determine if County facilities are mechanically safe for occupancy, then, if feasible, facilitate the repair or alterations of damaged or otherwise unsafe County facilities to safe operating levels, or secure them.

Under SEMS, ISD is also the head of the Logistics Section of the CEOC for the Los Angeles County OA. ISD supports other emergency services by providing and repairing communications; providing and repairing vehicles and off-highway equipment; providing fuel, water, and temporary power; providing procurement support for essential emergency supplies; and maintaining and/or restoring computer operations to support critical applications required for County operations. ISD serves as a liaison with utilities (except water) concerning the status of electrical, natural gas, and telecommunications systems. ISD is also the transportation coordinator for mass transportation resources, such as the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).

√ **MENTAL HEALTH**

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) provides care and treatment of mentally disordered individuals through County-operated mental health clinics and hospitals, State hospitals, and private contract providers.

In response to a disaster, DMH augments the Department of Public Health (Public Health) and DHS's Medical Divisions by providing disaster mental health services as requested through the CEOC. DMH coordinates and provides mental health services, including Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) Teams, to community disaster victims and disaster workers throughout the entire duration of the disaster and its recovery period.

√ **PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

The Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) responds to any natural or man-made disaster or emergency that requires the provision of emergency care and shelter for disaster victims. As such, DPSS is designated as the Los Angeles County Area Branch Coordinator for Care and Shelter. DPSS discharges this responsibility in cooperation with the Red Cross and support from other County departments assigned to support DPSS – local cities, County Office of Education, Salvation Army, Emergency Network Los Angeles (ENLA), California Department of Social Services, and Federal agencies as designated in the Federal Response Plan. DPSS is the OA liaison with private, not-for-profit human services agencies, including Community Based Organizations (CBOs). DPSS is also the OA liaison with the grocery industry.

DPSS manages the Emergency Food Stamp program when the County requests its activation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) gives approval. DPSS's In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) social workers

conduct health and welfare checks on high-risk disabled and elderly IHSS recipients immediately following a disaster and are responsible for the continuity of public assistance programs to eligible residents of Los Angeles County.

✓ **PUBLIC WORKS**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is the lead County department in conducting Safety Assessment and Construction and Engineering Recovery activities and has a lead role in responding to major emergencies. DPW maintains and repairs infrastructure, including: the road network, flood control system, general aviation airports administered by DPW and sewer and waterworks systems. DPW is also responsible for building and safety inspections subsequent to a disaster.

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING DIVISION

This Division serves as the lead for the County Building Evaluation Team (CBET), which is responsible for conducting safety evaluations and quantifying damage for County-owned and leased buildings throughout the County in the event of major emergencies. CBET is responsible for assisting the County in establishing priorities for building inspections based on the initial reports provided by the Internal Services Department (ISD) and County Department-assigned Building Emergency Coordinators (BECs), dispatching evaluation teams, conducting record safety evaluations, posting red/yellow/green placards on buildings, reporting the results of inspections to the Department Operations Center (DOC), the ISD DOC or CEOC, and compiling an estimate of the overall extent of damage to the County building inventory.

AVIATION DIVISION

This Division's role of responsibility for the five County-owned airports is to accommodate air transportation. In addition, Aviation is the lead Division for Operational Area Airports Damage Assessment. In the event of a major emergency, its first priority will be to quickly assess what Airport facilities have been affected and determine what actions, if any, are necessary to restore them to operational status. In addition to the above, airport personnel will cooperate with and provide facilities for law enforcement, fire fighters, and the civil air patrol, and work to accommodate large transport aircraft and the military as required during an emergency.

BUILDING & SAFETY DIVISION

In an emergency or disaster that involves damage or potential damage to private structures or property, Building & Safety Division (B&S) personnel will provide inspection and respond to request for assistance from the public in the unincorporated areas and contract cities. Their primary responsibility in the initial stages of a disaster is to quickly perform safety assessment to determine which private buildings are safe to occupy or need to be repaired or demolished. Additional inspection resources are available from other

sources including mutual aid from local jurisdictions, volunteers, or through State Office of Emergency Services. When requested, priority is given to determine the usability of public assembly complexes (including schools where requested) for use as temporary mass care shelters by volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross.

BRIDGE INSPECTION

After any major disaster causing damage, Design Division directs the inspection for damages to bridges, which are in the unincorporated areas or cities having service agreements with the Department. Priority is given to those on the Master Disaster Route System, then following with major bridges most susceptible to earthquake damage on the other routes.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS DIVISION

Environmental Programs Division (EPD) is responsible for investigating spills, which could adversely affect Public Works sewers, and/or storm drains. In addition, EPD is responsible for administering the Mass Debris Removal Plan and coordinating recovery efforts (debris removal, storage, recycling, disposal, etc.).

FLOOD MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Flood Maintenance forces patrol flood control facilities to ensure functional integrity and to initiate appropriate operational or emergency responses. Following the emergency, Flood Maintenance forces are committed to return the flood control system back to a state of readiness to prevent future hazards to life and property. Work typically includes the removal of debris from reservoirs and debris basins; reconstruction or repairing of storm drains, channels and pump stations; and ensuring the state of readiness of the dams.

GEOTECHNICAL & MATERIALS ENGINEERING DIVISION

This Division will provide geotechnical (geology/soils) expertise and materials testing and analysis services upon request. Geotechnical Investigation and Materials Laboratory staff are available to assist field divisions to assess and recommend geotechnical mitigation measures for landslides; rock falls; slope failures; damage to dams, channels and levees; road failures; and hazardous material infiltrating into the soil.

OPERATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

Operational Services survey damage and provide emergency repairs to traffic signals, streetlights, and pump houses in underpasses; and respond to problems involving downed or damaged traffic signs, particularly the critical signs.

ROAD MAINTENANCE DIVISION

During emergency situations, this Division performs emergency repair of bridges; clears and repairs damage to roads in the contract cities and unincorporated areas as quickly as possible (priority will be given to those routes on the Disaster Route Map); maintains records on street closures, danger areas, alternate routes, etc.; clears roads of mud and debris; closes roads that are washed out or otherwise impassable or unsafe for public travel; and provides barricades for road closures on request of the Sheriff, California Highway Patrol (CHP) or directing fire agency.

TRAFFIC & LIGHTING DIVISION

This division provides personnel to assist in performing detour and traffic control functions. They are also responsible for disaster route coordination in the OA.

WATER RESOURCES AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT DIVISIONS

These divisions coordinate with the Corps of Engineers operations personnel regarding the operations of Department and/or Corps of Engineers Flood Control and Water Conservation facilities. The Dams Status - Damage Data Collection unit collects, collates, and prepares status reports for submission to the CEOC for all State jurisdictional dams and reservoirs located such that they could impact the Los Angeles County OA.

Watershed Management Division will arrange for the distribution of bulk quantities of sandbags to the Los Angeles County Fire Department and city fire departments for distribution to individual homeowners and small businesses during the storm season.

WATERWORKS & SEWER MAINTENANCE DIVISION

The Division's initial response during a major emergency or disaster would be to immediately assess damage to the water systems in the Waterworks Districts and the sewer systems in the unincorporated and contract city areas and to make emergency repairs. Once all emergency repairs are made, the next effort would be to restore water and sewer service to all customers and stop any main line sewer overflows. This would involve minor repairs being done by Division crews with the larger repair items being contracted out to the private sector.

✓ SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

The Sheriff's Department performs mandated law enforcement functions regardless of the level of the emergency. Standard operating policies and procedures (i.e., Manual of Policy and Procedures, Emergency Operations Procedures, etc.) are in place to keep the peace; enforce applicable laws fairly and impartially; protect the rights of all people involved; and prevent property damage and personal injury. During an emergency where the CEOC is activated, the Sheriff is the Director of Emergency Operations; and,

the Sheriff's Department works in a unified command with the other agencies involved in the response. The lead agency for a response is that agency with the most to do on an incident (i.e., Fire Department in case of a fire, Sheriff's Department in case of a riot, etc.). If the Sheriff's Department is not the lead agency, it supports the lead agency by coordinating all law branch and evacuation activities. It is anticipated that only in worst case emergencies involving the entire County would the supporting County law enforcement agencies be mobilized. The supporting law enforcement departments are: Superior and Municipal Courts, District Attorney, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, and Probation.

The Sheriff's Department shares the strategic goals of the Fire Department during a fire. The priorities are:

- ***Preservation of Life:*** People and animals are evacuated ahead of an incident, or the Sheriff's Department may decide on "shelter-in-place", depending on time constraints. Evacuation of people and animals clears the way for emergency responders to effectively do their job.
- ***Containment of the Incident:*** The Sheriff's Department may set up roadblocks, checkpoints, and roving patrols of an evacuated or quarantined area. The Sheriff's Department's job is to keep the area secure, both for the residents and for the agencies working in the area.
- ***Protection of Property:*** As an incident winds down, the Sheriff's Department will open roads, allow access, and demobilize the marshaled forces brought in for the incident. This will be done at the direction of the Incident Commander, and takes into account the safety of such activities. This may not take place until several days after the incident is over.

OTHER COUNTY EMERGENCY ROLES

Other County departments, agencies, and commissions are also involved during disaster and emergency situations. These organizations are listed alphabetically.

√ **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**

The Department of the Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures is a support department to Public Health for administering and enforcing laws and policies regarding standards for marketable foods, plants, weighing and measuring devices and other commodities, and controlling and eradicating plant and animal pests.

In response to a disaster, the Department eliminates and prevents invasions of pests, such as fruit flies, which are harmful to crops; controls and eradicates noxious weeds; inspects produce and other commodities to ensure that they meet standards for public health, quantity, and quality; and inspects gas pumps, scales, and other commercial measuring devices to ensure that they work accurately.

√ **ALTERNATE PUBLIC DEFENDER**

During periods of emergency or disaster, the primary responsibilities and considerations of the Alternate Public Defender's office are the safety of employees and the public at work sites; preservation of vital departmental records and property; and continuation of legal services to clients. In addition, the Department provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ **ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL**

During emergencies, the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (Animal Care) patrols disaster areas to rescue domestic animals displaced by catastrophic events and provides support to fire and law enforcement agencies responding to the crisis. Additionally, Animal Care offers emergency animal housing at its shelters. Depending on the circumstances, Animal Care may also set up temporary emergency animal shelters to assist persons who have taken their pets from evacuated areas.

Animal Care has a multi-level Emergency Response Program, which includes Animal Control Officers, personnel, and equipment assigned to each of the six Los Angeles County Animal Shelters. The Emergency Response Program includes the following specially trained and equipped teams:

- ***Animal Rescue Field Support (ARFS):*** Teams of Animal Control Officers are trained to deal with small and large animal emergency and special circumstance response.
- ***Equine Response Team (ERT):*** A group of qualified volunteer horse and livestock owners assists with horse and livestock

evacuation in large- and small-scale emergencies. During an emergency, the volunteers will use their trucks and trailers to augment the Department's six horse and stock trailers.

- **Department Animal Rescue Team (DART):** A team that consists of Animal Control Officers and volunteers who have cross-trained with the Los Angeles County Urban Search and Rescue Teams and the County Fire Department Air Operation Staff to rescue horses and livestock using the Anderson Sling.

√ **ASSESSOR**

In response to an emergency, the Assessor will continue to provide for equitable, accurate, and timely assessment of all taxable property within the County and make appropriate adjustments in the tax roles.

√ **AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

The Auditor-Controller sustains professional financial leadership for the County through continued monitoring of financial performance by providing recommendations and reporting financial results, in sustaining economy and efficiencies, and in fulfilling the legal duties of the Auditor-Controller. Continuity of this mission following an event is essential to the conduct of County business.

√ **BEACHES AND HARBORS**

During emergencies, the Department of Beaches and Harbors is a support department to both the Fire and Sheriff's Departments, providing continuous essential services, such as employee safety, and the mobilization of off-highway and heavy equipment and personnel to mitigate damage to public and private property.

√ **CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

The primary concern of the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) is the safety and well being of the children in its care, the department's employees, and children otherwise known as "unaccompanied minors" who may be left unsupervised as a result of a disaster.

In a major disaster, DCFS will provide a variety of services for displaced children and offer various programs, including:

- Deployment of DCFS staff to designated Red Cross shelters to process the initial intake and registration of unaccompanied minors, including follow-up action to reunite them with their parents/guardians or to provide appropriate placement
- Support DPSS, on request, in the provision of emergency welfare services, including assigning staff to emergency shelters or relief

programs to assist in interviewing victims, processing requests for disaster assistance, and other related tasks

- Continuing commitment to provide services to children under DCFS care, including the placement of children affected by a disaster.

√ **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

The Community Development Commission (CDC), during an emergency, will continue and may need to augment their response in implementing the County's housing and community development programs, including redevelopment, low- and moderate-income housing development, and rehabilitation in unincorporated areas of the County and participating cities, including community revitalization, and loan assistance for small businesses.

√ **COMMUNITY & SENIOR SERVICES**

The Department of Community & Senior Services (CSS) is designated as a support department to DPSS for disaster-response efforts. CSS will provide liaison services through a human services community-based network of contractors through its operational units (Aging and Adult Services, Employment and Training, Community Services Block Grant) at senior centers, community centers, senior congregate and home-delivered meals, food pantries, and shelters throughout the County.

CSS also manages Adult Protective Services (APS) which provides services for elder and dependent adults, aged 18 and over. Immediately following a disaster, APS social workers will conduct health and safety checks on elder and dependent adults to determine their status and need for assistance. These checks are coordinated with DPSS's IHSS social workers.

√ **COUNTY COUNSEL**

Los Angeles County Counsel provides legal representation, advice, and counsel to the Board of Supervisors, the County, and other public officers and agencies. In times of emergency, County Counsel serves as an advisor to the Command Group and key CEOC staff on the legal aspects of emergency management; provides advice on the formulation of emergency orders, and reviews all emergency proclamations and orders prior to their being signed by the authorized executive.

√ **DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

The District Attorney's Office, pursuant to established contingency plans, will continue to represent the People in all felony prosecutions and juvenile hearings, as well as in all misdemeanor prosecutions where there is no city attorney. In addition to these responsibilities, the Department provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides a Countywide human resources program for a comprehensive personnel system and assists departments in their operations and ability to develop and maintain a high-quality workforce to provide critical services to the public. During an emergency, DHR may be called upon to implement personnel adjustments to respond to the event. They may also implement the Employee Disaster Assistance Program (EDAP) to help employee disaster victims.

√ MILITARY AND VETERANS

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs assists veterans, as well as their dependents and survivors, in pursuing legal claims and benefits under Federal and State laws.

√ MUNICIPAL COURTS

During periods of emergency or disaster, the primary responsibility and considerations of the Municipal Courts are: safety of employees and the public at work sites; preservation of vital departmental records; and maintaining the jurisdiction in misdemeanor cases, civil cases up to \$25,000, small claims up to \$5,000, and felony arraignments and preliminary hearings. In addition to these responsibilities, the Department provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ PARKS & RECREATION

The role of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) in the event of a disaster is to make its parks and facilities available to relief and disaster agencies for use as evacuation centers or mass care shelters to provide care and shelter for disaster victims. Park Rangers will act as the primary security resource at these facilities.

In a widespread disaster, DPSS and DPR personnel may be used to assist staff from the relief agencies.

√ PROBATION DEPARTMENT

The Probation Department, pursuant to standard operating procedures, will continue to enforce court orders; operate correctional institutions; incarcerate delinquents; and, time permitting, recommend sanctions to the courts and design and implement additional programs to reduce crime and ensure victims' rights. In addition to these responsibilities, the Department provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ PUBLIC DEFENDER

During periods of emergency or disaster, the primary responsibilities and considerations of the Public Defender's office are the safety of employees and public at work sites; preservation of vital departmental records and

property; and continuation of legal services to clients. In addition to these responsibilities, the Department provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ **PUBLIC HEALTH**

The newly formed Department of Public Health (Public Health) is the lead agency in case of an epidemic (natural or intentional), coordinating hospital resources, and deciding quarantine issues. Public Health also tests food and water to verify purity.

Public Health also provides and coordinates public health services during disaster response conditions. Public health services may include preventive health services, including the control of communicable diseases; coordinating inspection of health hazards in damaged buildings; inspection of vital foodstuffs, water, drugs, and other consumables; mosquito and other vector control; and detection and identification of possible sources of contamination dangerous to the general physical and health of the community.

√ **PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The County of Los Angeles Public Library is designated as a support department to DPSS. Upon activation of the CEOC, or as instructed, the Public Library will assist disaster relief efforts by providing staff to support the County's Disaster Victim Inquiry System (DVIS).

In addition to supporting the disaster information needs of the residents of the County of Los Angeles, the Public Library's Maintenance Section has general maintenance workers experienced in all types of repairs – equipment and several types of vehicles that can be made available to support the Logistics Section if necessary.

√ **RAPID TRANSIT**

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is the primary source of mass transportation equipment used by the Los Angeles County OA. Both busses and mass transit trains are available for use in evacuations, transportation of equipment and supplies, transportation of emergency response workers, and establishment of temporary bus/train lines for the transportation of victims to disaster shelters and other relief locations such as mass shelters. The Transportation Coordinator handles requests for MTA resources through the Logistics Section in the CEOC.

√ **REGIONAL PLANNING**

The Department of Regional Planning (DRP) prepares and maintains the Countywide General Plan, administers the County's subdivision and zoning ordinances, and maintains an information base on demographic and development conditions in the County.

DRP supports DPW, CDC, and CAO in accomplishing the Construction/Engineering and Recovery functions and supports the Board of Supervisors and Regional Planning Commission in dealing with the many disaster-related land use and zoning issues.

DRP maintains a responsive General Plan Safety Element supporting pre-event hazard reduction.

√ **REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK**

The County Registrar conducts Federal, State, and local elections; verifies initiative and referendum petitions; records real estate documents; maintains birth, death, and marriage certificates; issues marriage licenses; and files business documents. To the extent possible, the Department will continue to fulfill these duties in the aftermath of an event.

√ **SCHOOLS/OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is designated as the Los Angeles County OA Coordinator for matters relating to public schools. As such, LACOE monitors and reports the overall condition of public education in the OA. Reports will include the status of reunification of student populations with families, school closings, and condition of facilities.

As a direct operator of a number of educational and administrative programs, LACOE coordinates response and recovery activities for its own programs.

As support to Los Angeles County departments, LACOE may be called upon to assist in matters related to care and sheltering in public schools, coordinating assignment of school resources to the disaster effort, and providing information to the public on the status of schools.

√ **SUPERIOR COURT**

During periods of emergency or disaster, the primary responsibility and considerations of the Superior Court is: the safety of employees and the public at work sites; preservation of vital departmental records and property; and maintaining the jurisdiction in felony cases, civil cases in excess of \$25,000, small claims cases greater than \$5,000, and juvenile matters. In addition to these responsibilities, the Superior Court provides supportive assistance to the Sheriff's Department.

√ **TREASURER & TAX-COLLECTOR**

The Treasurer & Tax Collector bills, collects, invests, and safeguards monies and properties on behalf of the County, other governmental agencies, and entities and private individuals as specified by law. Continuity of this mission following an event is essential to the conduct of County business.

PLANNING TIMELINE

The timeline for developing a community emergency management plan can vary, based on a community's experiences, County and community representatives' level of involvement, policy-makers' involvement, and magnitude of issues being addressed. In the event that the County Sheriff and Fire Departments can identify resources and assign a local expert for one month to draft the unified tactical response plan for those two departments and the other involved agencies, the timeline can become abbreviated. Such joint involvement can result in common terminology, common maps and geographic definitions, and coordination of the respective departments emergency plans. This unified tactical response plan should include evacuation routes and planning zones.

In other communities, the timeline may be longer and additional resources (including consultants or facilitators) may be needed. Some stages might take one month to complete and other stages might take more time to accomplish.

The table contains an outline and suggested staging of the tasks to be included in developing a project timeline:

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING FOR UNINCORPORATED AREAS TASKS FOR DEVELOPING PROJECT TIMELINES	
PUBLIC AGENCIES	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct Department Assessments 2. Develop Work Plans for the Task Force¹³ and Work Groups 3. Participate in the Task Force or Work Groups 	
TASK FORCE	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Develop Work Plan 5. Recruit Work Groups 6. Monitor Process 7. Recommend Final Plan 	
WORK GROUPS	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Assess Needs 9. Develop an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) 10. Develop a public education and outreach plan 11. Develop Recovery Plan (RP) 	

¹³ Functions as a steering committee.

SAMPLE CHARTERS

TASK FORCE

The purpose of the Task Force is to: 1) manage the development of an effective emergency management plan including a disaster survival guide, a recovery guide, and a SEMS/NIMS compliant ERP and RP for the community; and 2) ensure that it is regularly evaluated and updated. The Task Force provides the forum for public agency personnel and community residents to work together to establish and maintain a community that understands potential hazards, is well prepared, and knows how to respond if an emergency happens.

The Task Force is composed of both community residents and representatives of the public agencies most involved in emergency planning, response, and recovery. The Task Force is responsible for ensuring the right people and resources are brought to bear on this planning effort.

The Task Force may establish Work Groups to develop specific parts of the emergency management plan and may also charter additional Work Groups to evaluate and update the plan as required.

PLANNING & RESPONSE WORK GROUP

The purpose of the Planning & Response Work Group is to assess the assets, identify the emergency planning needs, and develop a guide that builds on the assets and addresses the needs of the community. The plan will provide the community with instructions that will align with the ERP and RP of applicable public agencies.

RECOVERY WORK GROUP

The purpose of the Recovery Work Group is to assess the needs that will face the community after disasters or emergencies and identify the resources available to meet those needs. The scope will include all aspects of assistance to help the community cope with the aftermath of disasters. The guide will align with the OEM RP.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION WORK GROUP

The purpose of the Communication & Education Work Group is to ensure that residents and others who are part of the community are well-versed in the emergency management plan and have the tools to develop a family plan.

COMMON ACRONYMS

This Planning Guide contains many acronyms. The next table displays the following information:

- Column 1 – Acronym
- Column 2 – Definition of the acronym
- Column 3 – Explanation of the acronym
- Column 4 – Page numbers of where the acronym first appears in Chapters I, II, or III. The second page numbers refer to subsequent citations in Appendix A, “County Emergency Management Responsibilities”.

Acronym	Definition	Explanation	Page Number(s)
AEN	American Emergency Network (formerly, Community Alert Network (CAN))	Emergency term	29
Animal Care	Animal Care and Control	County department	9, 41
APS	Adult Protective Services	County program within CSS	43
ARFS	Animal Rescue Field Support	County initiative in Animal Care	41
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer	County department	1
CBO	Community Based Organization	Nonprofit or community-based group	36
CCP	Casualty Collection Point	Emergency term	35
CDC	Community Development Commission	County agency	43
CEOC	County Emergency Operations Center	County-operated emergency center	34
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team	Emergency response group	12
CHIP	California Highway Patrol	State agency	9
CISD	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	Emergency term	36
CSS	Community and Senior Services	County department	43
DART	Department Animal Rescue Team (DART)	County initiative in Animal Care	42
DCFS	Department of Children & Family Services	County department	42
DHS	Department of Health Services	County department	22, 35
DHR	Department of Human Resources	County department	44
DPR	Department of Parks & Recreation	County department	44
DPW	Department of Public Works	County department	4, 37
DMAT	Disaster Management Assistance Teams	County led by DHS	35
DMH	Department of Mental Health	County department	22, 36
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services	County department	9, 36
DPW	Department of Public Works	County department	4, 37

Acronym	Definition	Explanation	Page Number(s)
DRT	Disaster Response Team	Emergency response group	26
DVIS	Disaster Victim Inquiry System	County information system	45
EDAP	Employee Disaster Assistance Program	Emergency term	44
EM-MAC	Emergency Management Municipal Advisory Council	Governance option	32
EMSA	Emergency Medical Services Agency	County agency in DHS	35
EMC	Emergency Management Council	County oversight group on emergency management	21
ENLA	Emergency Network LA	County initiative in DPSS	18
ERP	Emergency Response Plan	Emergency-related document	1
ERT	Equine Response Team	County initiative in Animal Care	42
FCC	Federal Communications Commission	Federal agency	29
FRS	Family Radios Service	Emergency response group	29
IHSS	In-Home Supportive Services	County social workers in DPSS	36
ISD	Internal Services Department	County department	22, 36
LACOE	Los Angeles County Office of Education	County educational agency	46
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District	Local school district	27
MAC	Municipal Advisory Council	Governance option	23
MTA	Metropolitan Transit Authority	Local governmental agency	36
NIMS	National Incident Management System	Emergency term	2
OA	Operational Area	Emergency term	22
OAAB	Operational Area Advisory Board	County emergency advisory group	21
OAERP	Operational Area Emergency Response Plan	Emergency term	5
OEM	Office of Emergency Management	CAO Division	4
OUAS	Office of Unincorporated Area Services	CAO Division	1

Acronym	Definition	Explanation	Page Number(s)
Public Health	Department of Public Health	County department	9, 36
RP	Recovery Plan	Emergency term	1
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System	State agency	2
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats	Strategic planning term	11
T-CEP	Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness	Local community group in Topanga Canyon	26
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture	Federal agency	36